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ABSTRACT

With respect to the educational attainment of students and skill levels of the labor force, America cannot compete well on an international stage. Comparative international examinations reveal that American students know less than their counterparts in other advanced industrial countries. To help improve students' skill and educational levels, the 16 colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) have worked together to improve school-to-work implementation and system-building by promoting reform, organizing and coordinating programs, and providing staff development and instructional facilities. Specific school-based initiatives have included efforts to modernize curricula and teaching approaches, provide staff development and business exposure for teachers, develop applied and integrated curricula, improve the articulation and alignment of curricula, implement advanced standing certificates for high school students who master college-level work, and develop a core curriculum. Work-based learning is also emphasized, with over half of the System's associate degree programs offering work-based components and the majority of WTCS colleges supporting youth apprenticeships and other work-based programs. Finally, the WTCS colleges also work together to enhance career exploration, providing youth with on- and off-site career information services, providing career centers with state and local partners, and holding career fairs. (HAA)

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The Challenges of Implementation and System Building -- The State Leaders Panel

By

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Paper presented at "Skills for the Future," A National School-to-Work Conference Showcasing Wisconsin's Innovative and Exemplary Programs and Initiatives (Madison, WI, June 24-25, 1996).

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The Challenges of Implementation and System Building -- The State Leaders Panel

(Presented at Wisconsin's *Skills for the Future*
School to Work Conference -- June 24, 1996)

Welcome to all of you to Wisconsin's ***Skills for the Future*** Conference. I understand that there are at least 35 states represented here today, and we're glad you're here and hope you find the conference informative and enjoyable.

In about a month we will all see a significantly larger and very internationally diverse gathering in Atlanta as the 25th Olympiad begins. Think of the challenges, the international competition, the national pride, the individual glories and successes of the participants. Every year athletes from countries all over the world parade into the stadium under their country's flag, prepared to compete against each other to achieve records and standards that are the best in the world. The winners receive medals, glory, and a lifetime of recognition, honor and status in their countries.

But although the Olympics are perhaps the single most recognized and anticipated event on the global stage, their importance and significance pale when compared to what you and I are here to discuss these next two days. It's expected that the large American Olympic team will receive numerous gold, silver and bronze medals next month -- however, our American team of students and entrants into the workforce faces competition that the majority of the team can't even begin to measure up against.

When it comes to educational attainment of the **full body** of students in America (not just the top 25%) and workforce skill levels throughout the **full spectrum** of our labor force, America can't compete well on an international stage -- and our competitors are widening the gap. Medals and honor are trivial compared to what we risk losing if the American public doesn't acknowledge this problem of lack of competitiveness and unite to work for the changes necessary.

Here in Wisconsin we've made progress in acknowledging the problem and in working together to address it. And although we have a long way to go we've made some solid progress together -- progress in preparing students to join "the team" that can compete at the highest levels of international competition. I'd like to acknowledge the contributions and accomplishments of all those who are helping in Wisconsin, and especially of those groups who are represented at this panel..

In the next few days you'll hear about challenges to implementation and system-building and, in many cases, Wisconsin's responses to those challenges.

We've got to continue to raise the alarm about our growing inability to compete -- Americans need to unify as we have always unified when faced with national crisis. This has to be done in partnership -- we must refrain from finger-pointing and demonizing educators, business, the wealthy, the poor -- together

we've got to focus on the work to be done and **get on with it**. At next month's Olympics Americans would be united in their disappointment and embarrassment to see lead-footed sprinters, hurdlers who couldn't jump, scrawny weightlifters, or divers who were afraid of heights.

To compete in the Olympics against international competition you're going to be measured against the best, and you have to hone your stamina and skills and abilities to compete with the best. We've got to help our communities and our schools understand that we're now in an international economy on an international stage and there's nothing we can do to change that. We've got to be able to compete, and not just our best students and workers but the all of them.

Comparative international examinations reveal that American students know less than their counterparts in other advanced industrial countries. The older the student in America, the higher the educational gap. In science subjects American ten-year-olds place eighth in a ranking of ten-year-olds from fifteen countries. Three years later, at age 13, they've slipped to thirteenth. The math test scores of the **top 1%** of America's high school seniors would place them in the 50th percentile in Japan.

But I want to stress that we must not simply blame our schools and our teachers -- this is denial of a larger societal and community problem that will take our combined attention and commitment to resolve. We're all proud of the past where our schools have in most respects been the very best in the world. The competitive deficits we now face are not necessarily because our educational system is doing worse -- they result from our competitors doing better in a changed world.

Just like an Olympic pole vaulter does when international competition does better than he, we need to know what our competition is doing, raise the bar and work toward higher standards -- like the Milwaukee public schools did with a new and challenging math standard for students. When they raised the mathematics bar in Milwaukee 2 years ago most students couldn't get above it on their first try, and the school system suffered ridicule from those who should have known better. In two short years Milwaukee has turned the situation around, with the large majority of students exceeding the new, significantly higher standard. And it's only a start

We know what the international standards and training methods are. Let's post them in our national conscience like an Olympic trainee posts international top times on her or his training room wall. Let's continue working to prepare our team for the ongoing international skills and education competition.

We're working together in Wisconsin. **We're working together to prepare the team**. Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges have contributed significantly to this state's successes in school-to-work implementation and system-building. The technical colleges have shared a leadership role in all of the original Tech Prep/School to Work consortia and in many of the new School-to-Work Opportunities Act partnerships -- promoting reform, facilitating change, organizing and coordinating programs, providing staff development, and

providing direct instruction and instructional facilities. National school-to-work leaders have repeatedly stated that Wisconsin's school-to-work efforts are well ahead of other states largely because of the state-wide system of collaborative partnerships of which the technical colleges have been such an integral part. We're working together with all the partners you see represented here -- working with business and labor, the university system and other colleges, and with our K-12 partners to prepare young people to be part of a gold-medal winning team.

We're working together on a state-wide basis to prepare the team **in school-based initiatives** --

- working together in modernizing curriculum and teaching approaches in settings such as Blackhawk Technical College's Tech Prep-funded Staff Development and Curriculum Center, where over 400 secondary and postsecondary teachers have learned, accessed cutting edge curriculum or used instructional design tools during the last school year alone;

- working together in staff development and business exposure for teachers in places such as Northeastern Wisconsin Technical College, whose strong relationship with area Chambers of Commerce and area business and industry enables ongoing development and support of business internships for secondary and postsecondary teachers;

- working together in the development of Applied and Integrated curriculum such as Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College's 4-year cooperatively-led project with CESA (Cooperative Educational Service Agency) 10 and 11 that is working to develop Applied and Integrated critical thinking skills curricula for K-12 and technical college students;

- working together state-wide in articulation and alignment of curriculum between high schools and all 16 technical colleges, resulting in sequences of curriculum such as the Madison Area Technical College's nationally-renowned Agriculture and Biosciences curriculum
projects linking high school, technical college and university instruction for students;

- working together state-wide in development of advanced standing for high school students where they have mastered college-level material, for example at Milwaukee Area Technical College which in this year alone will award over 5000 advanced standing certificates to high school students; and at Waukesha

County Technical College where last year nearly 1000 high school students began earning technical college credit while still enrolled in high school; and, for youth apprenticeship graduates, at every technical college, where they can receive up to 12 credits of advanced standing for the competencies they mastered while a high school youth apprentice;

- technical colleges are working together state-wide in development of Core Curriculum which will help systematize entry-level curriculum and as a result enhance articulation opportunities for students throughout the state technical colleges;

- working state-wide in writing of almost all the curricula for the Wisconsin's nationally-renowned Youth Apprenticeship program;

- working together state-wide in design, development and implementation of the Wisconsin Instructional Design System, a performance based curriculum development tool which is in use at all 16 technical colleges and has already been put in place in 150 of the state's K-12 school districts.

The technical colleges are working together to prepare the team -- through **work-based learning --**

- Work-based learning has historically been emphasized in the Wisconsin Technical College System. Over half of WTCS associate degree programs offer (and frequently require) work-based learning components at least one of the technical colleges.

- The majority of technical colleges in the state are significantly involved in supporting youth apprenticeship and other work-based programs in their area -- often delivering instruction, providing mentor training, and even coordinating and operating programs, such as Nicolet Technical College, Mid State Technical College, and Western Wisconsin Technical College which with its business and K-12 partners was recently recognized as the top work-based learning site in America by CORD (the Center on Occupational Research and Development). In addition, the Rock County STW partnership (with Black Hawk Technical College) and its Edgerton youth apprenticeship site received third place in the nation.

The technical colleges are working together to prepare the team -- in connecting school and work and in **Career Exploration** --

- The 16 technical colleges are actively involved in providing career information and exposure for youth -- providing on-site and off-site services to help young people understand the tremendous variety of career opportunities available to them.

- Working together with state and local business/labor/educational partners to provide Career Centers designed for youth, like those at Western Wisconsin Technical College and Waukesha County Technical College.

- Working to provide career fairs such as Madison Area Technical College's Career EXPOsure, where last year over 4000 elementary, middle and high school students spent a day at the main campus -- exploring labs, engaging in experiments, listening to college instructors and learning about exciting careers. Strong leadership and outreach such as this is one of the reasons that **MATC/K-12 partnership was named the nation's best Tech Prep program last year by the AACC.**

We're working together to prepare the team, with Wisconsin's technical colleges combining to contribute millions of dollars from their budgets each year (above and beyond Carl Perkins, School to Work Opportunities Act and other federal dollars) in support of school to work.

As you'll learn at this conference, we've made a start in Wisconsin -- a start toward a system of helping students develop their *Skills for the Future*. No one thinks its going to be easy. But we're not going to give up, and neither can any other school district, business, community or state represented here today.

We need to continue to spread the word about this growing American crisis. We need to get communities, business and educators to work together to prepare students with Skills for the Future so that they aren't part of a progressively deteriorating economy where the American Dream is just a memory. We need to focus on key areas and systemic change. We need to stay in this for the long haul, stand united as a team and not give in to squabbling or blame. We need to raise the bar for all youth and expect success. This race isn't going to be won by the sprinters -- we're in a marathon. And as in any marathon, winning this race will take commitment, sacrifice, strength, resiliency, courage, and unswerving determination.